

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php

sacrifice once offered. And perhaps it was safer and better so, but it strikes the present writer as a loss; it would have been in keeping with very early Christian thought to have preserved the idea of such commemoration.

Mention has not been made of the Holy Communion as the occasion for offering the sacrifices of self, alms, and praise—though in all these subsidiary senses it has sacrificial associations—because the point of dispute is as to its relation to the offering of Christ. Scripture and the Fathers alike limit that relation to one of commemoration and representation.

The pioneers of theological expression used sacrificial language to signify that relationship, but its association with later developments of doctrine has robbed it of the innocent meaning which it once had, and therefore it seems undesirable in the present day to claim the same liberty of expression which the pioneers in theology exercised.



Home Reunion: A Wesleyan Outlook.

BY THE REV. DINSDALE T. YOUNG.

WITH a willing mind I add a few notes to the discussion of Home Reunion. Let me first of all say that I speak in no representative capacity. No one beyond myself is involved in the opinions I express. As an individual Wesleyan, and only as such, do I contribute to these pen-conversations.

Whilst this is emphatically so, I yet may claim that there is in Wesleyan Methodism a not inconsiderable body of opinion which coincides with my own. And, at the risk of egotism, I will add that I have peculiar opportunity of ascertaining the views of the rank and file of our Wesleyan ministry and laity, seeing that I have probably visited more of our churches than any living minister, and every week of my life I am going in and out among them.

Modern Wesleyanism is ecclesiastically composite. Divers

types are represented among us. Many of us are Dissenters in the strict definition of the term, which I understand to be opposition to the existence of an Established Church. Many of us (but probably a minority) are not in any wise Dissenters. Some do not even allow themselves to be called Nonconformists. They do not habitually or even frequently conform, but they have no inherent objection to conforming to the ways and customs of the Established Church of England. I believe I faithfully reflect the shades of opinion in the Church I have these many years loved and served.

Personally, I always decline to be called a Dissenter. I believe, and increasingly believe, in the principle of an Established Church; and were a conflict to arise on this question, I should not hesitate to defend my convictions. I respond in large degree to the position which Dr. Chalmers assumed on this subject. I feel sure that I am by no means alone among my brethren in subscribing to this position.

Let me frankly say that I am by preference a Nonconformist, but I could, without violating conscience, conform to what is *essential* in the institutionalism of the Church of England. The late Dr. Rigg was accustomed to say that he could conceive of himself accepting the hospitality of the Established Church; and I would follow that great man in such an assertion.

Having thus candidly expressed myself as to my angle of vision, let me with equal candour proceed to contemplate certain considerations which bear not remotely upon Home Reunion.

Assuredly there is a deepening desire among Christians everywhere for real union. We appreciate with reverent gratitude and hope the scope of our Divine Lord's High-Priestly prayer, and we would sacrifice many a personal preference if thereby true Catholicity might be achieved. We do not crave uniformity. Christian union is independent of uniformity. None the less, we see the immense moral advantage of a larger uniformity. "The man in the street"—and he is a man whose soul we must care for—can with difficulty distinguish between unity and uniformity. And, beyond doubt,

a quickened approximation towards uniformity would demonstrate Christian unity much more effectively.

How far, then, may it be supposed the school of Wesleyans to which I belong would be prepared to go in the matter of Home Reunion? If I use great plainness of speech, it is because the solemn importance of the subject forbids all equivocal expressions. First of all, there can be no question of mere absorption by the Church of England. This is axiomatic with us. We cannot reason with those who deny this thesis. We will say in affectionate sincerity, "The Lord be with you," but must also say, "Farewell in the Lord," to all such. Gladly will we co-operate with such in all wherein they desire our co-operation, but of Reunion there can be no possibility.

Reunion must be Reunion, and not absorption. Tremendous difficulties stand in the way, but that those hindrances need be for ever invincible I cannot imagine. Great ideals take long attaining; it is, however, salutary to have the ideals ever in our view. The question of ministerial "orders" is, of course, primary and paramount; no Reunion can be accomplished till the validity of Wesleyan "orders" is acknowledged. On this point I write with intense conviction. We believe that Holy Scripture, Christian "antiquity," and the undeniable experience of the Lord working with us, adequately vindicate our "orders."

Would any of us accept episcopal ordination? Here I use a trepid pen, but I surmise that even this might be if it were clearly understood that such acceptance did not involve the faintest doubt as to the validity of our "orders," and was but a concession to ecclesiastical propriety. In other words, acceptance of re-ordination would mean, *not ordination into the ministry of Christ, but into a new confederation of Christians*. Would many go so far in order to help to achieve Reunion? On such a matter I dare not be a prophet. The subject would need long and loving and patient consideration.

They would, it seems to me, be wise and prudent who did not press such a question as re-ordination. It would be asking much of one side. Would the other side be likely to ask pro-

portionately much? I have gone further in this than many of my dear brethren would go, simply because I feel that all the possibilities of the discussion ought to be faced. But I repeat my complete persuasion, that no Reunion is conceivable except on the mutual recognition of our Wesleyan ministerial "orders."

If this were generally conceded, other considerations, though all grave, would not, I think, be so insuperable. On two points I believe (some will say too optimistically) a large number of Wesleyans would have little objection to offer. I refer to the Episcopacy and to the Liturgy. The episcopal principle is by no means foreign to our Wesleyan system. How could it be, seeing we are the children of John Wesley? But if "the historic episcopate" is construed as meaning the modern type of Episcopacy as essential to the being of a Church, then a difficulty will arise which could never be surmounted. I believe in Episcopacy. I believe it to be for the well-being of the Church. Our Wesleyan organization recognizes this in our Chairmen of Synods. But to make it a *sine qua non* of a Church is to offer a proposition which Wesleyans could never accept. Discussions of Reunion, then, must be upon the basis of the recognition of that fact. Surely it is not fancy's idle dream that this need not bar the door eternally to the possibility of Home Reunion!

As to the Liturgy, I opine there need be little debate. In common with multitudes of Anglicans, Wesleyans would desire to see a judicious revision of some of its phrases, but they have no objection to the use of the Liturgy. Of course many prefer a non-liturgical service, and all claim liberty to pray with or without a liturgy, as occasion may seem to require. But numerous Wesleyans greatly love the Liturgy, and use it regularly at their Sunday morning service. Did the question of Home Reunion come within the near horizon, it is safe to say that there need be little controversy concerning the Liturgy.

I may venture to add that I do not imagine that such a rite as Confirmation would excite acute debate. Certain it is that in

Wesleyanism there is a strong and strengthening "stream of tendency" towards some such ordinance. How to bridge the gulf—a fearful gulf—between the period of Sunday scholarship and adult age is one of the problems that is ever with us, and imperiously clamouring for solution. That it might be destined to find solution in the rite of Confirmation is not a thing utterly incredible to some of my fellow-denominationalists.

Thus, honestly, and, some of my brethren will say, with too much concessiveness, I have looked at certain of the main obstacles to Reunion from the Wesleyan view-point.

Now on the general question. The feasibility of it would require long and prayerful and patient and loving consideration. "Neither is this a work of one day or two." But I for one dare not dismiss the consideration of it. I believe coming days will require every kind of Reunion that is possible among Christian Churches. Much will have to be yielded, in view of this inexorable necessity. Nor need I hesitate to say that there are historical and other affinities between the Church of England and the Wesleyan Church which ought to make Reunion a not impossible ideal. After all, Reunion should not be more unthinkable than Union.

I confess I cherish a dream of Church Union on a large scale in this kingdom. I am convinced "the last tremendous days" will demand it, and the longings of lovers of "the holy Catholic Church" will demand it. And in the interests of such a dream I would spare no effort and no prayer to further the cause of Home Reunion.

Meanwhile, it is obvious that on both sides there must be constant and assiduous approximations one to another. Only in an atmosphere of love can such evolutions ripen; and love can only show itself in generous deeds. There must be genial giving and taking. We must lose no opportunity of social converse; and we must demonstrate our spiritual communion. Nor must we hesitate to act together for the defence of the things of the faith.

Heart and soul I concur in the suggestions made in these

pages some months ago by Chancellor Lias. Let us meet for friendly conference. Specially let us meet for spiritual communion; and I doubt greatly the value, meanwhile, of such projects as the exchange of pulpits. All premature attempts at Reunion are apt to accentuate disunion. "Saving common sense" is a mighty factor in this momentous matter.

Surely it is blessed that men should cherish such a dream as that of Reunion on a greater or a smaller scale. Such visions may be our salvation as Churches.

As an individual Wesleyan, I have touched on but a few items of this great discussion. No one is more conscious of the difficulties than I am, but I believe no one is more sensitively alive to the splendour of the ideal; and I think that I have the Spirit of God when I say no one is more prepared to do all that in him lies towards the accomplishment of the ideal. May the spirit of Christian unity "mix with men and prosper"!



The Church and the World-Power.

A STUDY IN ACTS XII.

BY THE REV. W. S. HOOTON, B.A.

THIS chapter comes in as a parenthesis in the ordinary course of the history. No doubt its position is chronologically intentional, in order to bring up the general history¹ to the date at which the events occurred at Antioch, which are, at this point in the narrative, the main subject of consideration. But it is just one of those sections which can be taken entirely out of its surroundings and examined by itself. And, at first sight, it even appears to break the thread of the description of the rapidly ripening crisis at Antioch. We are brought back from this digression by the note added in ver. 25, which provides a link with Antioch again, in preparation for the following chapter. But, indeed, closer examination will show

¹ See ver. 1.